Purchase of Entertainment articles by Eastern Army Command

4419. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Eastern Army Command authorities purchased vehicles, T.V. and VCR worth over Rs. 6.79 crore out of Rs. 10 crore given to it for fighting militancy during period of three years beginning 1998.

(b) if so, the reasons therefore and the action taken against the officer found guilty; and

(c) whether it is also a fact that stock of 32,800 bulletproof 'Patka" bought by the above mentioned command between 1995 and 1998 was also found to be defective and if so, the details thereof and what action Government have taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Special financial powers have been delegated to GOCs-in-c, Northern and Eastern Commands for incurring expenditure on urgent requirements for counter-insurgency operations.

Existing authorisation of vehicles/equipment to fighting units is for conventional operations. For counter-insurgency operations, the authorisations are inadequate. Light vehicles of different types of civil pattern like Maruti Vans, Gypsies, Auto Rikshas, Motor Cycles and Clycles were, therefore, procured by the Eastern Command to blend with the local environment existing in the area of operations.

As confirmed by Army HQRs, only four VCRs and eight TVs worth Rs. 2.28 lakhs were procured for troops to screen training films on Counter Insurgency Operation, record operations conducted by security forces both from the pint of view of drawing lessons for future and for operational events as they occurred in the eventuality of allegations against the Army for Human Rights Violations. The equipment is also used for psychological operations and interaction with media.

Bullet Proof Patkas consist of a thick steel band worm round the head in cloth harness to support it. They effectively protect the

soldier from bullet injuries on the fore-head. To meet the need for personal protection of troops combating insurgency, a total of 32,800 Bullet Proof Patkas were procured by Eastern Command between 1995 and 1998. The Bullet Proof Patkas have served the purpose for which these were procured and in Eastern Command there have been no casualties that have occurred to troops due to bullet injuries sustained on the fore-head. The item is ought for by the users and there have been no complaints from user units.

The delegated financial powers have provided flexibility to Army Commanders to counter insurgency in sensitive border States. The procurements from delegated financial powers have been made within the spirit of the delegation and have also had a positive impact on the morale of the soldier in the field due to the availability of requirements in a shorter time-frame.

Contracts with M/s. RVZ, Russia for supply of various types of ammunition

4420. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that two contracts were signed with M/s. RVZ, Russia for supply of various types of ammunition in August, 1999 and December, 1999 at a total cost Rs. 402.76 crores;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that the residual shelf-life of ammunition supplies was drastically low as stated in the CAG Report on OP-VIJAY, the Kargil Operation; and

(c) If so, the reasons for selection of these short life ammunition?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Two contracts were entered with M/s ROSOVOOROUZHENE (RVZ), MOSCOW, RUSSIA on 11.8.1999 and 9.12.1999 for supply of ammunition from stocks of the Russian Army at a value of Rs. 412.2 crores.

Keeping in view the urgency of the requirement and the lead time likely to be involved in the 'supply of the ammunition' during